

Holocaust, Denial of the

Claims that the mass extermination of the Jews by the Nazis never happened; that the number of Jewish losses has been greatly exaggerated; that the Holocaust was not systematic nor a result of an official policy; or simply that the Holocaust never took place. Clearly absurd claims of this kind have been made by Nazis, neo-Nazis, pseudo-historians called "revisionists," and the uneducated and uninformed who do not want to or cannot believe that such a huge atrocity could actually have occurred.

Holocaust denial was attempted even before World War II ended, despite the obvious evidence at hand. The Nazis who carried out the "Final Solution"—the extermination of European Jewry—used euphemistic language like the terms "Final Solution" and "special treatment" rather than gassing, annihilation, and killing, in order to conceal their murderous activities from the world. During the last two years of the war, *Sonderkommando* units, put to work in a secret program called *Aktion 1005*, were charged with digging up mass graves and burning the corpses. Again, the Nazis' purpose was to hide all evidence of their activities.

In the present day, more than 50 years later, there are still some people who either completely reject the notion that the Holocaust happened or say that the Holocaust was not as widespread as it actually was. "Revisionist historians" and other pseudo-scholars are active in much of the world. In 1978 a revisionist group in California established the Institute for Historical Review. The group, which claims to be scholarly, publishes the *Journal of Historical Review* and holds international conferences.

Revisionists often say that the Holocaust did not affect as many people as it really did. A Frenchman named Paul Rassinier, one of the original founders of the revisionist school, stated that only 500,000 to one million Jews died gradually during World War II, mostly due to bad physical conditions—not systematically at the hands of the Nazis. Rassinier also claimed to have found the millions of Jews who disappeared from Europe. He maintains that the large number of North African Jews who moved to Israel both before and after

it became a state were not always native North Africans. Rather, they were Jews who had fled Europe before and during the war.

Arthur R. Butz, an American revisionist, alleges that a mere 350,000 Jews are missing. He even goes as far as saying that some of them are not really missing, but rather just fell out of contact with their families, while only about 200,000 were executed by the Germans during the war. Butz also claims that many Jews were not killed, but rather immigrated to the United States illegally, changed their identities, and were absorbed into American life without leaving a trace of their former selves. Furthermore, he maintains that the number "six million" was created out of thin air by the Zionists, and that Yad Vashem can only come up with three million names of Holocaust victims.

Revisionists claim that Holocaust diaries, testimonies, and photographs are not credible and are full of lies. Some deniers say that the Nazis could not have physically cremated so many people so quickly, nor could Zyklon B gas have feasibly been used on a regular basis in one place. With the advent of the Internet, Holocaust deniers have used this medium to spread their messages of hate. Many websites, established by them or by related groups such as white supremacists, offer their skewed version of events.

Important steps have been taken to combat this misinformation. In some countries Holocaust denial has been made illegal and those who perpetuate it are punished. Many Holocaust museums have been established, and Holocaust education has been instituted in many schools—in order to ensure that, despite the efforts of deniers, it will never happen again.